

Information Technology Newsletter

Information Technology Services, State of Nebraska

The Mission of Information Technology is to serve the citizens of Nebraska by providing premier information technology leadership, policy and operations, which facilitate an effective, responsive and efficient government.

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FROM THE CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER ...

Welcome to 2006. All of us within the technology divisions of the State hope that you had a wonderful holiday season and are looking forward to the upcoming year. We believe this will be a year filled with all kinds of exciting advances in technology and we hope that we will be able to partner with your agency to accomplish your goals and serve the citizens of Nebraska reliably. We also hope that 2006 will provide additional opportunities to work together on enterprise views of items such as security, infrastructure and support.

If you take a minute to look back at 2005, together we did accomplish some amazing things in the area of Technology (and by we, I am referring to all of us). We deployed an enterprise Blackberry service in less than 90 days that currently serves over 15 different agencies and over 50 devices. We have bid out a disk storage refresh for the mainframe and should be able to provide redundancy to agencies at the current billing rate. We have installed a Storage Area Network (SAN) unit in conjunction with the Legislature that will be used to provide service to State agencies.

Our first wireless test project was conducted in the Capitol and is currently providing service to registered agencies. We are deploying private DSL service to remote agency locations, as well as political subdivisions, to provide higher speeds at lower costs. Enterprise agreements are being bid, negotiated and signed for hardware and software to obtain lower pricing and to ease procurement methods for agencies. Desktop and server support packages are available for agencies to purchase that include a 3-year and 4-year technology refresh plan. Instant messaging was added to the Lotus Notes product and offered to agencies. Basic mail was deployed as one of the two email packages as identified in the Nebraska Information Technology Commission standard. We deployed electronic, touch-screen driver-testing terminals in Motor Vehicle sites across the State. We are testing eCitations in the State. All of this could not have been done by just one entity. It has all been accomplished through the cooperation and collaboration of every agency in State Government working for the good of the State as a whole.

This year Governor Heineman articulated his technology strategy. It is based on four principles: 1) the state's information technology (IT) policy and operational groups will work more closely together; 2) state government must employ a uniform technology strategy; 3) the state should strive to eliminate duplication of IT expenditures and purchase technology as a group so the state can more inexpensively and effectively deliver the services citizens expect; and, 4) technology should be taxpayer-friendly, expanding access and encouraging citizen involvement.

By continuing to work as an enterprise, we can make huge strides in 2006. Technology is one area where we all have the opportunity to tear down the silos between agencies. To date the spirit of cooperation in this area has been admirable. Thank you for your participation in 2005.

Brenda L. Decker
Chief Information Officer
State of Nebraska

Large-scale Storage Refresh

In October, we issued a RFP to acquire new large-scale (mainframe) disk storage to replace our existing devices. The existing storage has become very expensive to maintain, while newer storage architectures offer several attractive features. We received bids from representatives of each of the four large-scale storage manufacturers and selected the best proposal in December. The new storage will be implemented this spring.

In addition to providing more capacity to support the needs of our clients, the new storage has two important benefits. First, the new storage is faster than the devices it replaces. This means that both batch and interactive processes will often complete in less time than they do today. Batch jobs are

expected to finish sooner and CICS transactions will respond more quickly.

The most significant benefit is improved disaster preparedness. The new storage will automatically maintain a logically consistent copy of all data on a second (mirrored) device in a remote location. Should a disaster affect the primary storage, we will be able to recover mainframe data from the mirrored storage for all but the last few seconds of processing. The mirrored storage greatly simplifies the effort required to recover from a disaster and essentially eliminates the possibility of data loss for mainframe systems.

Finally, the new storage will be implemented without an increase in storage charge rates. Mainframe-based systems will enjoy the benefits of better performance and greatly improved disaster preparedness with no increase in cost to our clients (Tom Conroy 1-4348).

New Qwest Centex Contract

We are in the process of finalizing a new contract with Qwest for Centrex and voicemail service. As the new contract is implemented, we will keep you informed of any changes that will affect your agency. The anticipated implementation date is during the month of February. The transition period could take up to two months to complete. If you have any questions, please call our office at 402-471-2761.

Adding State Holidays to Lotus Notes Calendar

It's that time of year! Did you know that Lotus Notes will allow you to add all the state holidays to your calendar in a few quick steps? When you add a set of holidays, Notes adds each holiday to the Calendar as an anniversary marked by a small blue balloon icon.

To add holidays

1. Open your Calendar.
2. From the menu, choose Actions - Tools - Import Holidays.
3. Select the holiday set named **Nebraska State Holidays (2006)**, which is located about halfway down the list.
4. Click OK.
5. (Optional) To delete a holiday, select the holiday in your Calendar and choose Edit - Delete.

How to Make Your Lotus Notes Run Faster

Once in awhile someone will comment to us that their Lotus Notes is running a bit slow or it now seems much slower than it used to be. There are some specific reasons for slowness and you, the user, can often fix it yourself. We thought we'd share these tips with you.

First, technical literature states that Notes workstations and servers respond **12-50% faster** when Inbox sizes are kept to a minimum. So we recommend that you:

- Routinely (like every morning) look through your Inbox
- Delete what is unnecessary.
- File important things away in a folder.
- Items that need follow-up rather than filing should be flagged with a due date (see our previous newsletters about flags) and finally deleted or filed when complete.

If your schedule is too unpredictable to routinely maintain your inbox, create a folder called "Old Inbox Items" and move things there on a Friday. But don't forget about those old items! Clean them up when time allows.

Secondly, do a serious house cleaning on your mail. IMServices doesn't currently enforce a mail quota yet so your Notes file will grow if you don't maintain it. A large mail file requires more processing effort from the server and from your workstation. Sort your mail file by size and, if possible, remove the largest e-mails. If you continue to need attachments (marked with a paper clip), move them to your document drive. So for example, if you see that several of the largest e-mails in your file consist of a string of memos, eliminate the previous versions of the e-mail string and keep the one that contains the entire set. If some of e-mails contain duplicate attachments, delete all but the most recent of the duplicate attachments (Marcia Stewart 1-8226).

2006 Nebraska State Government Directories

The 2006 Nebraska State Government Directory has gone to print. This past year, the responsibility of updating directory information was done by each State agency. Thank you to everyone for their contribution to this task. Each agency will be receiving their new directories toward the end of February. If you should have any questions, please contact our office at 402-471-2761.

New Desktop Service Available

The Division of Communications Desktop/Server Team is now offering a new Desktop Services Package. This package is structured to provide you with hardware, software, and many services under a three-year or four-year lease.

The Desktop/Server Team will take care of everything from purchase to surplus. We will handle all of the paper work, all of the software updates, security patches, antivirus protection and support calls.

Enclosed with your bill is a brochure outlining this service. Please take time to review the brochure and give us call if you would like to further discuss this new service (Stan Schmidt (402) 471-6602).

Wireless Services

Effective January 1, 2006, Division of Communications has undergone some organizational changes. These changes have shifted the responsibility for wireless services within the agency. Norma White is the new contact. In the future, when placing orders for cellular, pager, satellite, and blackberry services, equipment and accessories, please contact Norma at 402-471-6391 or nwhite@notes.state.ne.us

Bob Howard and Lana Brox have assumed the management responsibilities of the Wireless Section. They can be reached at 402-471-2761.

Business Continuity Planning/Disaster Recovery Planning – Shared Services

Since the first quarter of 2005, several meetings have been held to assess the viability of pursuing business continuity planning/disaster recovery planning as a shared service. Steve Henderson has been facilitating the meetings and many agencies have participated in the meetings. The participants have chosen to submit two items to the Nebraska Information Technology for consideration for inclusion in the statewide technology plan.

To ensure integration with State Emergency Operations Plan (SEOP) and respond to the restoration priorities as established by the State Government Council, the Business Continuity/Disaster Recovery Shared Services Group will:

- 1) Adopt and promulgate National Incident Management System (NIMS)/Incident Command System (ICS)
- 2) Develop a standardized agency disaster recovery plan format

(Dave Berkland 471-0688)